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Dr. Fox

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**Narrative Essay**

In a world different from my own, I encountered my girlfriend named Mariko that has impacted my writing development. I met her through one of my friends in Japan while I was living in his house to experience the culture and also to acquire more of the natural language. I was staying in Japan during the school year with my teachers’ permission since I worked ahead of schedule in the class so that I could possibly visit some college campuses and also get applications for Japanese universities. There were also other reasons such as wanting to use my newfound language abilities and also experience the culture. Japan is a wonderful place; however, real-life must come first which is why I had come back to the United States. Although it was only two years ago that I met Mariko, it has changed a lot about who I am and what I do as a writer because I had to communicate frequently by e-mail to her in order to stay in touch in addition to helping her with her English homework. Although I was skilled in writing at the time that we met, it forced me to constantly write which allowed me to improve my writing skills even more since she was a second language learner.

I met her in the November of 2008, and it was a cold fall for Japan. In fact, it even snowed at that time which is surprising because it usually does not snow much in Japan. It was totally unexpected for me because the average temperatures were much lower than the temperatures stated on the weather website. We met through my friend, Naoto, while we were having dinner at a restaurant. After we met, we walked around Shinjuku and talked until it was time to leave for the last train. We decided to meet the next day which is when she asked me to help her with her homework for English class.

Her homework was to copy a few pages from a *Peanuts* book in cursive handwriting and also answer the questions for the story. Honestly, I was nervous and my heart was beating rapidly. I also recall the beads of sweat forming on my forehead in addition to the butterflies in my stomach because this was a rather long lesson, and it was difficult for me since I usually do not write in cursive. I thought, “What if I make a mistake? Will she lose her interest in me or think that I do not have the ability to teach English?” In the end, it worked out great, and I feel that she enjoyed thoroughly enjoyed the lesson. Even though I already made the choice to become an ESL teacher, I think that this made me realize how great it is to help people as a teacher. I showed her how to write in cursive which was slightly more difficult than I had anticipated, and we then discussed the questions that were given by her teacher. Afterwards, we went out to have sushi and then enjoyed the rest of the night in Tachikawa.

When I came back to the United States, I was almost always on my mobile phone because I missed Mariko. I talked to her by e-mail or Skype almost all the time. It did not matter what we talked about, but we talked a lot which is what allowed me to become a better writer since we communicated a lot. Every once in a while, I will write something in cursive and ask her to read it for me just to see if she remembers what I taught her when we first met. Not only do I feel that it has improved my writing skill, but I also feel that it improved Mariko’s English writing skills since she was and still is put into an immersion situation by talking to me. Before I met Mariko, I always made mistakes in my writing; however, after I met her, I had to use good grammar and speak properly so that she would learn English correctly from me. Even though I was not her teacher, I felt that I, as an American, would be someone that she would look to for help during her second language acquisition process since there are not many foreigners in Japan.

I feel that Mariko is a huge milestone in my development as a writer because she teaches me a lot about myself as a writer. Even though we just simply write e-mails to each other and I help her with homework, I feel that it allows me to improve my skills as well as the quality of my life which will allow me to improve my skills as a writer even more in the future as an ESL teacher.